

29. SIGHTINGS OF ORTOLAN BUNTING *EMBERIZA HORTULANA*
AT THE GRASSLAND AROUND GANGAPUR, NASIK

The Gangapur Dam, 14 km west of Nasik, in Maharashtra, is surrounded on all sides mostly by grasslands and crop fields of wheat, harbara, tomato and cabbage. *Heteropogon contortus*, *Cynopogon martinii* and *Dichanthium annulatum* are the three major grass species of the grassland.

The grassland is the major habitat for wintering buntings, namely the grey-necked bunting *Emberiza buechanani*, black-headed bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* and red-headed bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*. They have been regularly observed in large flocks for the last four years between October and March in the grasslands and cultivated lands.

Some of the other wintering migrants seen in large numbers are the greater short-toed lark *Calandrella cinerea* (now *C. brachydactyla*), yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*, citrine wagtail *Motacilla citreola* and common swallow *Hirundo rustica*.

On November 19, 1997 while we were photographing a flock of buntings, seven buntings, which looked different from the above mentioned three species landed in a semi-ploughed field. On close observation, we saw the yellow moustachial streak extending to the hind neck, the prominent grey head, yellow throat and breast and the yellow eye-ring, which tallied with the description of the Ortolan bunting *Emberiza hortulana*. The birds were photographed, and the photographs sent to the BNHS and confirmed as

those of the Ortolan bunting.

The birds were seen around the same area till February 1998. The sighting of this species in Nasik is not only the first record for Maharashtra, but also an authentic record for India after 27 years. The last record for India was at Delhi in 1970 (Jackson and Gaston 1972). This species has been sighted regularly in subsequent seasons in small numbers at the same site by the bird watchers of the Nature Conservation Society of Nasik. Hence, the status of this species in India could be changed from 'vagrant' of Ali and Ripley (1983), to an uncommon winter visitor.

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30. SIGHTING OF THE ROCK BUNTING *EMBERIZA CIA*
LINN. IN RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK, RAJASTHAN

Ranthambore National Park, an area of 392.5 sq. km, is located between 25° 54' - 26°

12' N and 76° 23' - 76° 36' E in the southeastern part of Sawai Madhopur district, Rajasthan. The

average elevation of the Park is 350 m above msl. The temperature fluctuates from 48 °C in summer to as low as 2 °C in the winter. During the rainy season, which extends from July to September, the Park receives about 800 mm of rainfall. It has a Mixed Dry Deciduous and Thorn Forest, predominantly comprising of *Anogeissus pendula*. The following observation was made during a 17-day trip to the Ranthambore National Park in January 2000.

Ali and Ripley (1987) recorded three subspecies of the rock bunting *Emberiza cia* — the Himalayan, the Tibetan and the Transcaspian. The Himalayan subspecies *E. cia stracheyi* is restricted to the Western Himalaya, through Kashmir and Nepal. The Tibetan subspecies *E. cia khamensis* is found in southeastern Tibet, northern Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Sikkim and eastern Nepal. Interestingly, the Transcaspian subspecies *E. cia par* is known to exist all the way from the NWFP, Ladakh, Lahul and Spiti (summer grounds) to Punjab foothills (below 600 m), Ambala (Haryana), Delhi and Dehra Dun (wintering grounds). There is also a mention of a specimen from Varanasi (Benares, Uttar Pradesh). All the three subspecies are known to be common wherever they exist.

I saw a pair of *E. cia*, in all probability *E. cia par* (Transcaspian subspecies), the paler of the three subspecies, on two separate occasions in Ranthambore on 20th and 23rd January, 2000

respectively. On both instances, it was seen in the evening in open grassland interspersed with *Anogeissus pendula* and *Acacia* sp. In fact, a pair was once seen along with a flock of white-capped buntings *E. stewarti*. The lateral black crown stripes and the bluish-grey throat of the male *E. cia* easily distinguish it from *E. stewarti*, which has an uniform grey crown with a conspicuous black throat patch. While *E. stewarti* winters regularly in many parts of Rajasthan, the range of *E. cia* within Rajasthan is unknown.

Grimmett *et al.* (1999) and Kazmierczak (2000) have shown the species in Maharashtra in the distribution maps without giving specific references. These are interesting records, and in case we consider them bonafide, the bird should also occur along the corridor that links Maharashtra to its summer grounds in Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh. In the light of such an assumption, it is not improbable to find the bird in Ranthambore (east Rajasthan) during winter, when the birds, in a bid to escape the severe cold, scatter from their breeding grounds situated in the higher reaches of the Himalayas. The sighting invites us to investigate its distribution in other regions of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

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31. FRUIT AND NECTAR RESOURCES IN A MOIST DECIDUOUS FOREST AND THEIR USE BY BIRDS — A PRELIMINARY REPORT

It is important to identify key plant resources used by wildlife to effect conservation and management actions (Kannan and James 1999). While there have been extensive studies

on frugivory and nectarivory and on related aspects like seed dispersal and pollination abroad, very little is known about these topics in our country, but for a few studies e.g. Rajasekhar